

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 545

EA 015 938

TITLE Actions for Local Boards of Education.
INSTITUTION Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO. Task Force on Education for Economic Growth.
PUB DATE [83]
NOTE 6p.; For related documents, see EA 015 936-943 and EA 016 153 (the report).
AVAILABLE FROM The Distribution Center, Education Commission of the States, 1860 Lincoln, #300, Denver, CO 80295 (6 copies, \$5.00).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Guides; Advisory Committees; *Boards of Education; *Change Strategies; Cooperative Planning; *Educational Improvement; Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Guidelines; Pamphlets; *Public Education
IDENTIFIERS PF Project

ABSTRACT

Actions which local boards of education can take to promote the improvement of K-12 public education are presented in this brochure. The brochure is one of a series which offers specific ways in which different interest groups can respond to the eight broad action recommendations proposed by the Education Commission of the States' Task Force on Education for Economic Growth in their report, "Actions for Excellence." The following areas are covered by the recommendations: (1) educational improvement plans; (2) partnerships between states and communities; (3) educational resources; (4) teacher improvement and recognition; (5) the student's academic experiences; (6) educational quality assurance; (7) educational leadership and management; and (8) services to students who are unserved or underserved. (DC)

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ACTIONS
FOR
LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth

Education Commission of the States

EA015938

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WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The challenge facing leaders in every state of the union is to inspire a new generation of citizens to be even more productive and imaginative than the generations who made "American know-how" a standard of excellence around the world. Beyond inspiring them, leaders must **empower** them by providing an education system that fosters the necessary skills, imagination and commitment.

Unfortunately, report after report indicates that we have for too long ignored the obvious connection between a well educated work force and a productive, expanding economy. In addition, technological changes over the last two decades are outpacing the schools' capacity to address change. Skills we asked the schools to stress a few short years ago seem inadequate today. And as the demand for highly trained people has risen, the achievement of students — especially in high-demand skills such as analysis or problem-solving — has been declining.

Americans have every right to be proud of an education system like no other in its commitment to serve **all** citizens, not just a privileged few. Today many exemplary schools, colleges and universities are graduating students who are as well prepared as any in the world to face the challenges of the future. But our schools must be strengthened, if they are to do what they alone can do: bring about an American renaissance.

We are challenged to act now, each in our own way, to:

- Establish clear, compelling and widely agreed upon goals and priorities for improving education
- Upgrade our expectations for children and the skills required to meet those expectations
- Collaborate as never before — educators, governors, legislators, business and labor leaders and citizens — to strengthen the schools
- Educate **all** students in the skills essential to economic productivity and to the high quality of life a strong, growing economy can provide.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE?

In December 1982, the Education Commission of the States established a national Task Force on Education for Economic Growth under the leadership of Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. Forty-one distinguished national leaders set these goals for the Task Force:

- Create national understanding of the need for a well educated work force and of the changing skills essential to economic growth
- Promote policies, programs and actions that national, state and local leaders can use to improve education
- Establish partnerships among leaders in communities, business, labor, government and education to improve education in ways that lead to economic growth and a higher quality of life for all Americans.

The Task Force has published *Action for Excellence*, a report on the condition of education today and a series of recommendations for leaders throughout the country. The Task Force's eight major recommendations appear below. Following each are some steps local school board members can take to reaffirm a national commitment to our children and our economy.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN SCHOOL BOARDS TAKE?

Local initiative has always been a potent force in American education. Innovations by school boards, their enthusiastic endorsement of new cooperative programs and their efforts to muster community support will be vital to the success of education for economic growth. The Task Force and the National School Boards Association urge local school boards to respond to the recommendations of the Task Force through written school board policies.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop — and put into effect as promptly as possible — plans for improving education in the public schools from kindergarten through grade 12.

- To help formulate a state plan, local boards can:
 - Set up meetings with legislators from each community to explain the local commitment to excellence and to suggest what the state plan should include
 - Work with the state school boards association to advise the governor, state legislature and state board of education on the development of the state plan
 - Urge the governor and state legislature to review those portions of state laws that are seen as inhibiting educational improvement.
- To prepare local plans, boards can:
 - Hold public hearings throughout the school district to begin determining local educational priorities; inform the public about the purpose of these hearings and the opportunity for public comment
 - Request the superintendent to let principals and teachers in each school make specific suggestions to the school board about what they think the local plan should include
 - Use educational research, opinions of business leaders and the state plan in combination with local findings to develop the local plan
 - Set specific goals to reach by specific times
 - Consider cooperative efforts with adjacent school boards.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 2

Create broader and more effective partnerships for improving education in the states and communities of the nation.

- Encourage local business leaders to participate actively in public education.
- Seek out and support innovative cooperation between businesses and schools.
- Help create a climate in which non-traditional types of cooperation in education can flourish.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 3

Marshal the resources which are essential for improving the public schools.

- Serve as advocates for the instructional needs of children and as ambassadors of the instructional program, explaining it to the community at large.
- Assess district needs for laboratory equipment and supplies; seek outside funds to match local expenditures in these areas.
- Make the best possible use of existing resources.
- Work to ensure that education receives strong local financial support.
- Seek to increase the financial, human and institutional resources invested in local schools.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 4

Express a new and higher regard for teachers and for the profession of teaching.

- Develop sound written school board policies for recruiting, training and compensating teachers.
- Explore ways to attract and keep outstanding teachers.
- Encourage the state legislature, institutions of higher education and private funding sources to provide scholarships and loan-forgiveness programs for teachers in critical shortage areas like science and mathematics.
- Establish aggressive recruiting programs for high-quality teachers.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 5

Make the academic experience more intense and more productive.

- Provide sufficient time for academic learning by studying and, where funding permits, recommending:
 - Lengthening the school day
 - Lengthening the school year
 - Decreasing non-instructional demands on teachers, class time and students.
- Renew efforts to strengthen the curriculum from kindergarten through high school.
- Establish firm, explicit requirements concerning discipline, attendance and homework where these requirements are not yet in place.
- Enlist parents in the educational effort in new ways; for example, establish programs that train parents to help their children learn.
- Develop evaluation procedures to ensure accountability for the quality of the academic experience.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION

6

Provide quality assurance in education.

- In cooperation with teachers and school administrators, put in place systems for increasing effectiveness and rewarding outstanding performance.
- Cooperate with principals, teachers and superintendents to examine the practice of lifetime tenure for educators and its effect on instructional excellence.
- Establish programs that monitor student progress through periodic testing of general achievement and specific skills.
- Seek funds for curriculum development and testing in critical areas like science, mathematics, computers, economics, writing and problem-solving.
- Support the review of certification rules to permit qualified people from business, industry, the scientific and technical communities and higher education to serve in the schools where this is feasible.
- Work with a broad-based group of local educators, business leaders, labor leaders and other interested citizens to define and communicate the mission of the schools in training students for employment and citizenship.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION

7

Improve leadership and management in the schools.

- Through written school board policy, encourage principals to devote adequate attention to improving classroom instruction.
- Encourage the superintendent to put principals squarely in charge of improving the quality of education and to hold them accountable for quality.
- Establish extraordinary rewards for extraordinary performance by principals.
- Set high standards for recruiting, training and evaluating principals.
- Initiate — or support — the establishment of institutes where prospective principals can be trained in educational management; support improved in-service training for principals.
- Plan for more and better use of computers and other types of new technology in science, mathematics and other disciplines.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION

8

Serve better those students who are now unserved or underserved.

- Review programs to identify academically gifted students and provide them with a rigorous, enriching curriculum.
- Attract students whose capabilities may have been overlooked for reasons other than intellectual capacity into fields where they are now underrepresented.
- Support the broad, equitable distribution of educational resources so that no child is denied the possibility of becoming a productive member of society.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

For further information about agendas for action and the work of the national Task Force, contact:

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of the States**
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1860 Lincoln Street
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